

## Habakkuk 1:1-11: When Life Seems Unfair

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Habakkuk

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### Introduction

- Images on the Jumbotron - a CEO caught with a woman not his wife, a CEO taking a hat from a child at the US Open, a woman putting her finger in a dad's face at a Phillies game who retrieved a ball for his son. As a result, all three have been blasted on social media and have faced lasting repercussions for their moment caught on the big screen.
- We like to see people who have done wrong get what they have coming for them. We want to see justice. Yet, we're also relieved that our worst moments are not on the screen for everyone to judge.
- God sees it all. He doesn't need a jumbotron. He knows every injustice that has ever been committed. AND... He is the God of justice.
- [Isaiah 61:8](#): "For I the Lord love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense."
- If God loves justices, why do so many injustices go unpunished?
- Crooked politicians. Corrupt CEOs. Wars that leave thousands dead. Closer to home—unfair treatment at work, wounds in your family, the pain of suffering while others seem to get off easy.
- If God is just and fair, why doesn't He do something?
- We're beginning a short series in a prophetic book that wrestles with this question. An ancient prophet, Habakkuk, takes the same questions we're asking to God, and God answered.
- First eleven verses: two ways to respond when life seems unfair.

## When life seems unfair, bring your struggles to God.

- Habakkuk lived in a time of upheaval. World powers were conquering each other, and it felt like the small nation of Judah was stuck in the middle.
- To the north, the great superpower of Assyria had already captured the northern Kingdom of Israel, and they had bullied the southern kingdom of Judah.
- Ultimately, God spared Judah from Assyria under the reign of Hezekiah. Hezekiah chose to turn to God in prayer in the face of Assyrian oppression, and the Lord struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers ([2 Kings 19:35](#)).
- South of Judah, Egypt was a strong power that teamed up with Assyria to fight the new superpower of Babylon. As they marched towards Babylon the Egyptians killed Josiah, King of Judah, and for a short time, Judah fell under the sway of Egypt.
- However, in 605 B.C., Babylon defeated Egypt and Babylon was poised to take control of Judah.
- Habakkuk lived through all of this. He saw his small country constantly oppressed by foreign enemies. Where was the justice for Israel?
- He also saw how his own people turned their backs on God. After Kings David and Solomon, the southern kingdom had a mix of good kings and evil kings. Josiah, a king in Habakkuk's time, was a good king who brought much reform. But, one of the kings after Josiah, Jehoiakim, a son of Josiah, led the people right back into idolatry.
- Habakkuk saw it all around him - the idolatry, the injustice, the mistreatment of the poor, the sexual sin, the violence.

- Sometime between 609-605 B.C., right before Babylon invades Jerusalem, Habakkuk brings his complaint to God. “The pronouncement...” (vs. 1). Also translated “oracle” or “burden.” He’s the burdened prophet.
- Habakkuk unique. The prophets are a word FROM God to the people - a word of warning. Habakkuk is a word TO God - a lament much like the psalms of lament.
- Two questions: “How long?” (vs. 2) You’ve had that question for God before. “How long, God, will you allow me to suffer? How long will you let the injustice continue? How long will you let me be treated unfairly?”
- vs. 2 - Habakkuk crying out and it doesn’t seem that God is listening. Seems like his prayers are going unanswered. You’ve felt that way.
- vs. 3 - Second question: “Why?” In the first four verses, Habakkuk not focused on Assyria, Babylon, or Egypt. He’s focused on his own people. Why doesn’t God do something? Why does tolerate the injustice? The wrongdoing? The oppression and violence?
- vs. 4 - A bold statement: “God’s law is ineffective.” After all, no one seems to obey it and justice is perverted. If God is good, holy, and just, shouldn’t he do something in Judah?
- In 722 the the northern Kingdom captured by Assyria because of their rebellion against God, and now the southern Kingdom doesn’t look any different. Big question: How in the world would Israel be a blessing to the world (Abrahamic Covenant) if they were such a horrible mess?
- Habakkuk struggles, but these struggles are actually evidences of Habakkuk’s faith. Think about it: Habakkuk could have given in to idolatry. He could have turned his back on God. He could have indulged in the sins of his people, but instead, he presses in to his faith. He brings his struggles to God when life seemed unfair.
- It’s not sinful to bring your candid struggles to God. That’s exactly what you need to do when you are struggling with questions of unfairness.

- How do you struggle with God without sinning??
- **See struggling as evidence of faith.** If you don't care about God dealing with sinfulness, then something is wrong with your heart. When someone has sinned against you, or when you see blatant sin in the world, it's right to want God to deal with it. But, check your motive - do you want God to bring justice just to prove your right or to satisfy a desire for revenge? Or do you want God to bring justice for His glory, so that others might see His ways are better?
- **Cling to God's character.** Habakkuk brought his questions, but not accusations. Nor, did Habakkuk bring answers. He didn't tell God what God should do. Habakkuk doesn't accuse God of being unjust, unloving, or a liar or anything of the sort. Rather, he continues to hold on to the character of God (1:12-13). It's ok to be honest and bring your questions. However, it becomes sinful when we start believing lies about God or accusing God of being unloving, or unjust, or wrong.
- **Embrace your limited understanding.** Two questions: how long, and why? Part of walking by faith is understanding that you might not always get the answers to your questions. God might not answer the "how long" questions, or the "why" questions in your present situation because He is at work in ways that are too great for your mind to understand.

## When life seems unfair, believe God's plan is good.

- The prophet questions and God answers, but in no way is it the answer that Habakkuk would expect.
- vs. 5 - "Be utterly astounded! I am doing something in your days you will not believe!" God's word to Habakkuk: "You're not going to get it. You're not going to understand."

- God would bring MORE injustice and MORE violence into Habakkuk's life in order to deal with the injustices of His people. The Babylonians (Chaldeans) would be God's tool of judgment to judge Judah.
- God had warned of this day. In the Old Testament Law he warned His people that he would send them into exile if they failed to obey Him. "The Lord will bring you and your king whom you sent over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known" ([Deuteronomy 28:36](#)).
- Babylon a tool of God's judgment? On the surface this doesn't seem fair or just. Wasn't there another way to deal with Judah's rebellion? Babylon was worse than Judah!
- vs. 6-11 - a description of Babylon. Babylon is frightening. They're fast. They're fierce. They swoop in like eagles to devour. They are set on violence and they make a mockery of other nations.
- vs. 11 - Ultimately, they're an evil guilty people who have made their strength their god. Ultimately Babylon will fall, but not before God uses this evil nation for His purpose.
- Imagine being Habakkuk - this makes no sense. (We'll explore next week in vs. 12-17.) God raising up a terrible empire! What kind of answer is that to Habakkuk's complaint? Where's the comfort? Where's the hope?
- Yet... We know what Habakkuk didn't know. We know the rest of the story. Babylon would come in and take the southern Kingdom into exile. For 70 years, the Jews would live in exile because of their sin just like God had warned.
- Then, after 70 years, after Babylon fell to the Persians, the Jews were free to return to their homeland. Many came back and rebuilt Jerusalem, but many stayed behind and were dispersed throughout the ancient world.

- Dispersed throughout ancient world, the Jews would begin to build synagogues - places of worship where Jews would gather as well as Gentiles who feared God.
- Why does this matter? In [Acts 13](#), Apostle Paul sent out by the church at Antioch of the first missionary journey. In Antioch of Pisidia, Paul comes to a synagogue, and he begins to preach the Gospel.
- This was the practice of Paul - to go to Jewish synagogues spread throughout the ancient world and preach the Gospel - synagogues that started popping up during the Babylonian exile. Paul's missional strategy was to go to the synagogues.
- In [Acts 13](#), Paul proclaims the death and resurrection of Jesus and then in [Acts 13:41](#), Paul quotes [Habakkuk 1:5](#). He's saying that [Habakkuk 1:5](#) ultimately points to Jesus. Even more astounding that God would send Babylon to take the Jews captive because of their hard hearts is the reality that God would send His Son in the world to live a perfect life and die NOT ONLY for sinful Jewish people but for the sins of the whole world. Talk about astounding!
- The promise to Abraham: His descendants would be a blessing to the whole world. Even if the Jews were unfaithful, God would still be faithful. Habakkuk couldn't understand or see it, but God used the Babylonian exile to spread the Jewish people throughout the whole world.
- Then, Jesus came, died, and rose again for the sins of all people. Then, God raised up an apostle who would go to the ends of the earth proclaiming the Good News of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and both Jew and Gentile trusted Christ by the thousands.
- Talk about a fulfillment of [Habakkuk 1:5](#)! God was at work in ways that Habakkuk could not have dreamed to bring about His promise to Abraham. God brings salvation through judgment. In Habakkuk through the judgement of Israel, and ultimately through the judgment of His Son.

- Everywhere Habakkuk looked, He saw injustice, but the reality is that on God's timetable, He was bringing about ultimate justice as He prepared to deal with sin once and for all at the cross.
- Is God unfair? Absolutely not! Is God unjust! No! Is He unloving! No! God is at work in ways that you and I cannot see to accomplish His plan for His glory and our good!
- No matter how unfair life might seem to you right now, believe that God's plan is good!
- In those moments that you feel like God is unfair:
- **Live at peace: Trust God's plan.** God's plan is higher than yours ([Isaiah 55](#)). Right now, what seems unfair or unjust is weighing heavily on you. But, God knows what He is doing. He knows the end of the story, and He knows how He is at work for His glory and your good. Let that encourage you to keep trusting Him. Rest in the reality that God knows exactly what He is doing.
- **Live on mission: Use your circumstances for God's glory.** God was setting all this up so that ultimately the Gospel could be preached to the nations. God's purpose remains the same in every generation: that people would know Him. Constantly testify...Talk often about how you God at work even when life seems unfair. Testifying regularly opens up opportunities for Gospel conversations.
- **Live expectantly: Look for God's work even in the confusion.** Life seem unfair? Doesn't mean God's not at work - He is! How do you see Him at work? What is He teaching you? What relationships is He wanting you to cultivate in this hard season? How does He want you to lean in to your faith? How does He want you to join Him in His work? What steps of faith does He want you to take?
- Don't let the unfairness of life rob you of your joy. Trust that God is good and in control for His glory and your good.

- If you're not a follower of Jesus, let me tell you what is fair. What is fair is eternal punishment for sin. What is fair is God giving you what you deserve. Yet, God desires to give you the gift of salvation if you'll believe that Jesus died and rose again for you. This morning, repent of your sins and trust Him as Lord.